

## MINUTES

### Milford Harbor Management Commission, March 16, 2023, 7:00 P.M., Milford Landing

#### **Board Members, Liaisons and Staff Present:**

Joseph Gilbert, Vice-Chairman  
Nancy Bennett, Secretary  
Jim Beard  
Raymand Kirmaier  
Dora Kubek  
John Nevin  
Richard Preneta  
James Donegan, Harbormaster  
Lee Henchman, Deputy Harbormaster  
Raymond Vitali, Board of Aldermen

#### **Board Members, Liaisons & Staff Absent:**

Robert Brennan, Chairman  
Gregory Harla, Board of Aldermen  
Dylan Mark

Vice Chairman Gilbert advised that he would chair the meeting as Chairman Brennan could not attend. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

#### **Consideration of the minutes of the meeting of February 16, 2023**

A motion was made by Mr. Beard and seconded by Mr. Kirmaier to accept as corrected the minutes of 16 February 2023 special meeting; it passed unanimously.

**Public Comments:** There were no public comments.

#### **Chairman's Report :** J. Gilbert

Vice Chairman Gilbert said he had contacted legislators to voice supported for enacting legislation to give the commission back its authority to review permits.

#### **Director's Report/ Harbormaster Report:** J. Donegan

Mr. Donegan reported that a date of Saturday, 5/20, was set for dedication of the pier in memory of Ray Oliver. Mayor Blake (who will have begun his next assignment at that time) promised to be there and speak. Mr. Donegan said he is working on a program, likely to be held in the morning. Mr. Beard urged Ms. Bennett to speak as well, recalling that she dedicated the Hotchkiss Bridge.

Mr. Donegan said the dinghy racks construction project was rebid using wood rather than steel, resulting in a new price under \$30,000. The low bidder—Epifano Construction, Milford—was awarded the job. He said a purchase order was being cut and the project is still on track for 5/1.

He said mooring and rack contracts were due tomorrow (3/17) with 25 non-respondents out of 130 potential renewals. He said that with 20 on the waiting list, all maybe accommodated.

He said he was sent the notice of tentative determination for dredging and that the Army Corps of Engineers will put out the contract out to bid in the next 30 days. He said he is also working on funding for mooring removal and reinstallation, that he spoke with mayor's office today, but there is no word yet.

He reported that the rest room project is well underway. The space has been gutted and reframed, the electrical roughed with plumbing work to begin Monday, 3/20. He said he anticipates that it will be ready for spring. Ms. Bennett asked if the same footprint had been used. Mr. Donegan said it had, but a new layout had eliminated wasted space to include 2 ADA compliant areas that open onto patio area.

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Mr. Nevin opened a discussion on how to approach and complete 2 aspects of the dredging activity—the normal dredging activity that is planned and the dredging that must be handled in a specially prescribed fashion due to contamination. Mr. Donegan said disposal may have to be done upland or at a confined aquatic disposal site (CAD), but that none are available in New England now. Ms. Bennett suggested individual testing to locate contamination more precisely, rather than composite, to identify problem areas. Mr. Gilbert asked if the Army Corps or City would support that cost; Mr. Donegan said he would investigate and that, depending on what is required, the next level of testing would be more costly. He said a decision would be required as to whether the contamination mitigation would be considered part of this project or if it becomes a different project. Mr. Gilbert and Ms. Bennett expressed concern about shoaling at the head of the harbor and that access to the marinas could become difficult. Mr. Donegan said the Corps position currently is to complete this project before the next, but this probably is a good discussion to start. Ms. Bennett stressed that access to the launch ramp and marinas is very critical and that this aspect of the dredging should be considered urgent. Mr. Preneta said if the cost to do more precise testing isn't prohibitive, the commission should consider funding it. Mr. Gilbert said setting up a timeline would help; Mr. Donegan said he would ask about the plan. Mr. Gilbert said he thinks the commission should discuss the topic next month. Mr. Kirmaier reframed the potential testing cost as an investment, not just spending.

#### **Deputy Harbormaster Report:** L. Henchman

Mr. Henchman said he was contacted by Stratford's Harbor master about how to best manage a \$50,000 grant from the state to help clean up efforts on the Housatonic River. Discussion ensued about cleaning debris from the riverbanks, culling the marsh, and dragging giant trees out of the river. Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Henchman agreed that many people volunteer annually to clean up the banks, and that adding \$50,000 to the volunteer program could fortify such efforts.

Mr. Henchman said bids for the Housatonic mooring inspections were in but were extremely high because insurance requirements set by the city's risk management were very stringent. Mr. Donegan said they had researched other communities, noting that moorings on the Housatonic River are different than in the harbor because on the river, people own their tackle. He said that in other river-based plans, owners are liable for their own inspections. They choose the diver and can often have repairs done quickly. Mr. Henchman enumerated the moorings and helixes. He and Mr. Donegan noted that transferring responsibility to the owners changes a limited amount of text in the Harbor Management Plan. The main benefit is a lower annual cost for Housatonic River mooring holders. Mr. Henchman shared draft documents for owner and diver agreements that could be kept on file. More detailed theoretical discussion ensued on how such a process would be managed to ensure that it follows the harbor plan, that inspections meet plan criteria, that owners hire a credentialed diver, and that if moorings fail, liability falls to individual owners.

A motion to amend Harbor Management Plan to transfer Housatonic River mooring inspection responsibility from the Harbor Management Commission to Housatonic River mooring tackle owner was made by Mr. Preneta and seconded by Mr. Kirmaier.

Discussion: Ms. Bennett pointed out that the harbor formerly used this model. Mr. Donegan suggested that there may have been a cost benefit to shifting inspections to the city at one time, but it is no longer the case. Mr. Gilbert said he saw the change as a win/win.

The vote to approve was unanimous.

**Permit Reviews:** None.

#### **Report of Standing Committees**

Lisman Landing (Dylan Mark, John Nevin). **None**

Finance (Bob Brennan, Nancy Bennett):

**Checking**     **\$206,877.72**

**Savings**     **\$271,609.32**

**Total**        **\$478,487.04**

Nominating Committee (James Beard, Nancy Bennett) **None**

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Harbor & Mooring (Richard Preneta, Bob Brennan) **Discussed earlier.**

**Housatonic** (Raymond Kirmaier, Dora Kubek) **None**

**Amendments** (James Beard, Joseph Gilbert) Mr. Gilbert said he had given much thought to amending the Harbor Management Plan (HMP), citing many discussions and much expertise on the part of the commissioners, but not enough time. He referred to Geoff Steadman, who has come before the commission in the past and wrote the original plan. Mr. Gilbert noted that the plan has lots of moving part and must be structured to ensure state acceptance. He said Mr. Steadman lives in Norwalk, still consults, and writes plans. Mr. Gilbert suggested inviting him to provide perspective and there was a consensus to invite him.

**Shell Fishing** (Robert Brennan, Joseph Gilbert, Ray Kirmaier) Mr. Gilbert said he investigated broadening the city's involvement, but that the commission should be careful with what tasks they take on, leaving as much responsibility, particularly enforcement, with the state as possible. He said if the commission wants to attract people with knowledge of shell fishing, it should create criteria for joining. Ms. Bennett suggested asking Mr. Steadman to comment about a combination of the two functions and that shell fishing decisions affect livelihoods and the environment with long lasting effects. Mr. Beard thought there should it be a subcommittee. Mr. Gilbert said he voted to have a dual commission. Mr. Kirmaier remembered going back and forth on the issue. Mr. Vitali asked who creates the commission; Mr. Gilbert said it was the aldermanic board and mayor. Mr. Beard said he agrees that Mr. Steadman should advise on this topic; Mr. Preneta also agreed. Mr. Donegan and Mr. Henchmen reviewed how Stratford has set up dual commissions. Mr. Gilbert reiterated that he wants to leave much oversight with the Department of Aquaculture as possible.

**Correspondence: None.**

#### **Old Business**

20 Rogers Avenue – P&Z Updates: Nothing new.

Channel & Anchorage Dredging – Previously covered.

Ct. Port Authority – SHIPPS Grant: Nothing new.

Memorial Plaque—plaque ready, installed prior to May dedication.

**New Business:** Mr. Preneta raised the issue of trash, asking if cameras can be installed in the boat launch area. Mr. Henchman and Mr. Donegan discussed existing cameras and signal interfaces, noting that the pavilion feeds to Milford Police Department. Discussion ensued about the potential cost of cameras, how they would be powered and whether information from they would trigger a police response. Mr. Kirmaier added his concern about dinghy rack security to the problem of chronic garbage. Discussion of the redevelop plan for Founders Walk noted that Shipyard Lane will be extended and are cameras part of the plan? Mr. Donegan said he would look for plans for that project, that garbage cans are emptied by the Department of Public Works daily in summer and weekly in winter and that in summer, the dock crew also cleans. Mr. Beard asked Aldermanic Liaison Vitali to review plans with DPW.

Mr. Nevin expressed frustration that no progress was being made regarding 20 Rogers Avenue. Mr. Donegan said he would contact DEEP to see if a notice of violation had been issued.

**Liaisons** – Stratford—None.

**Adjournment** at 8:13.

Attest: M.E. Greene, recording sec'y

Any individual with a disability who needs special assistance to participate in the meeting should contact the Operations Director, 874-1610, five days prior to the meeting if possible.